

# The influence of Beijing exhibition hall on the development of urban space

**Yantong Fei**

School of Architecture and Design, Beijing Jiaotong University, No. 3, Shangyuan Village, Beixiaguan Street, Haidian District, Beijing, China, 100081

19311005@bjtu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** The study of Chinese modern architecture is beneficial to clarifying the development process of Chinese modern architecture, tracing the evolution of Chinese modern urban patterns, and summarizing the development experience, which is of great significance for future urban planning and construction. Through archival research and document reading, this paper sorts out the site selection and construction process of the Beijing Exhibition Hall, focusing on the influence of the “metropolis plan”, the urban planning and architectural design ideas of the Soviet Union on the planning and construction of the Beijing Exhibition Hall. The influence of Beijing Exhibition Hall and the shaping of urban spirit are summarized, and the importance of Beijing Exhibition Hall is emphasized. It is found that under the influence of Soviet Union’s urban planning and architecture thought, Beijing Exhibition Hall had played a key role in the formation of urban space in the western suburbs of Beijing, and also shaped the unique urban spirit of this area.

**Keywords:** Beijing exhibition hall, western suburbs of Beijing, socialist urban planning, urban space.

## 1. Introduction

The Beijing Exhibition Hall is located outside Xizhimen, Beijing. Because of its distinctive architectural form, it has become a landmark urban landscape in this area. Looking back at history, the process of Beijing Exhibition Hall from site selection to design and construction is the epitome of Beijing's urban planning and construction development in the early days of the founding of New China. The research on the Beijing Exhibition Hall is mostly about its architectural design and structure. Wei and Yang studied the value and significance of the history, culture, art and reality of Beijing Exhibition Hall by analyzing its planning and design ideas, architectural layout and form, and architectural decoration details [1]. Li took the Soviet Union Exhibition Hall as a case to reveal the impact of landmark buildings on the urban landscape, cultural identity, mass consumption and social life in a specific social environment [2], which was instructive for this article.

The existing studies lack an analysis of the development of urban space and the spiritual shaping of Beijing exhibition halls. Starting from the perspective of urban planning, this paper sorts out the process of site selection and construction of the Beijing Exhibition Hall through literature research, and archives research and discusses the influence of the Beijing Exhibition Hall on the evolution and development of the urban space. Besides, the shape of urban spirit is also explored. This work can help the public to

realise the importance of main urban public buildings and pay more attention to the affect of city spirit they have made.

## **2. The influence of Beijing urban plan on the location of Beijing exhibition hall**

### *2.1. Planning and development of the western suburbs*

After the liberation of Beiping (renamed “Beijing” in September 1949) in 1949, the former Public Works Bureau of the Beiping Municipal Government was reorganized into the Beiping Construction Bureau, and the "Peking Urban Planning Commission" (referred to as “Metropolitan Committee”) was established to carry out Capital planning work. The Metropolitan Committee hired construction, civil engineering and other industry experts as committee members and consultants, including Liang Sicheng and Chen Zhanxiang. In the urban planning symposium (“5.8 symposium” for short) organized and held on May 8, 1949, Liang expounded the planning concept of building the capital administrative region in the western suburbs of Beiping. As an important area of Beijing, the western suburbs began to appear in the consideration of Beijing urban planning in New China [3]. The “5.8 Symposium” is an important origin of the planning thought of the “Liang-Chen Plan”. Liang’s plan for building a capital administrative region in the western suburbs of Beijing is the core essence of the “Liang-Chen Plan” [4].

In February 1950, Liang and Chen jointly completed the Suggestions on the Location of the Central People's Government's Administrative Center, namely the “Liang-Chen Plan”, which clearly proposed to expand the west suburbs outside the city to the east of Gongzhufen, west of the moon Altar of moderate locations, which is planned to open up sufficient addresses for government administrative agencies, and designated as the administrative center area of the capital [5]. "Although the “Liang- Chen Plan” failed to win in the multi-party game, part of the planning for the western suburbs was realized. Under the influence of the “Liang-Chen Plan” on the planning of the western suburbs, the western suburbs park (now Beijing Zoo) was opened, the Sanlihe area established "four ministries and one meeting" and other ministries and commissions, and the construction of the community with living facilities began. The western suburbs of Beijing have been further developed as a cultural and educational area.

### *2.2. The establishment of Beijing exhibition hall site*

In 1952, Li Fuchun, deputy director of the Economic Committee of the State Council, discussed economic aid to China with Soviet leaders in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union proposed to build an exhibition hall in China to show the socialist construction achievements of the Soviet Union in the fields of economy, culture, science and technology, construction technology and architectural art [1]. Pavilion that is, the Soviet Union Exhibition Hall (renamed Beijing Exhibition Hall in 1954). The site of the museum was finally selected outside Xizhimen in the western suburbs of Beijing. The base is adjacent to Xijiao Park (now Beijing Zoo) to the west, Xizhimen City Gate (now Xizhimen Transportation Hub) to the east, Nanchang River to the north, and the main traffic road (now Exhibition Hall Road) to the south, with beautiful scenery, convenient transportation and cultural Great atmosphere.

## **3. The influence of the soviet union on the design of Beijing exhibition hall**

### *3.1. The influence of socialist planning thought*

The urban development in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China has many similarities with the Soviet Union. First of all, both countries have a socialist political background and share the same vision for the development of the capital of a socialist country. In addition, both the urbanization rates of China and the Soviet Union have gone through a process of jumping from a low level to the new regimes established to break the feudal dynasties. Among them, the Soviet Union began to implement the first five-year plan in 1928. By 1940, the urbanization level of the Soviet Union had reached 32.5%, an increase of 14.5 percentage points in 13 years, with an average annual growth rate of more than 1 percentage point. In 1949, when New China was founded, due to the political alliance

between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union and the adoption of a "one-sided" strategic policy in terms of social and economic systems, the theoretical thinking of the Soviet Union's socialist urban planning and construction also became the basis for the founding of the People's Republic of China, which can provide a theoretical guide to incipient city building and planning activities [6]. At this time, the Soviet Union had recovered from the war and carried out the fourth five-year plan, and the idea of "socialist city" planning and construction had also been formed in urban planning. The content of the reconstruction of the capital Moscow also had a profound impact on the planning and constructions of Beijing [5].

### *3.2. The influence of stalinist architecture*

The Stalinist architectural style refers to an architectural style formed in the Soviet Union during Stalin's leadership period. It began in 1933, with the "Final Design Plan for the Palace of the Soviets" as the starting sign, and the Stalinist model was officially established. In 1947, in order to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of Moscow, rest up the post-war cityscape, and showcase the achievements of socialism, the Soviet authorities decided to build a group of skyscrapers similar to the Palace of Soviets (unbuilt). Since then, Seven Stalinist buildings appeared in Moscow one after another, also known as Moscow "Seven Sisters" buildings. The Stalinist architectural form is magnificent, tall and majestic, with a symmetrical layout. Most of them have bell towers and are magnificently decorated, full of "superfluous decorations" Revolutionary Passion and Glory [7]. Taking the main building of Moscow State University, the tallest building among the "Seven Sisters", as an example, the influence of Stalinist architecture on Beijing Exhibition Hall from project site selection to design and construction is discussed.

In terms of site selection, the location of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is somewhat similar to the main building of Moscow State University. The main building of Moscow State University is located on Sparrow Hill on the southwest side of the Third Ring Road in Moscow, facing the Moskva River in the northeast, and surrounded by Moscow Children's Palace and city parks. The Beijing Exhibition Hall is located on the northwest side of the second ring road in Beijing, facing the Nanchang River in the north, and surrounded by the Beijing Zoo and Planetarium. Both are located on the outside of the city's main ring road, adjacent to the city's important rivers, and there are many cultural and leisure facilities in the surrounding area.

The architectural form of the Beijing Exhibition Hall also has many similarities with the Stalinist architecture represented by the main building of Moscow State University. There is a 58-meter-high spire on the roof of the central building of the main building of Moscow State University, and a five-pointed star weighing 12 tons is placed above it. The two side towers are lower than the central tower, and the two 18-story and 9-story wings and the central part of the building enclose the central garden. Before 1990, it was the tallest building in Europe. The exterior of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is dominated by an 87m-high central tower and a spire, with a shining five-pointed star on the spire. The central part is towering, and the two wings are symmetrically surrounded by buildings, enclosing the square. It was once the tallest building in the western suburbs of Beijing when it was completed.

The red five-pointed star on the top of the central tower of the building can be traced back to the red star on the top of the Kremlin, and the national spirit it is given comes from the 1941 Moscow Defense War. It is said that the German army was approaching Moscow, and the red star shining above the Kremlin could be seen through a telescope, while the Soviet soldiers and civilians, inspired by the famous slogan "Russia is big, but behind us is Moscow", resisted the strong attack. Since then, the red star that recorded the victory has become a symbol of the Soviet Union. The "Seven Sisters" built in Moscow, including the main building of Moscow State University, also set up red stars at the top. Under its influence, the Beijing Exhibition Hall also uses this design.

## **4. The impact of Beijing exhibition hall on urban space**

### *4.1. Development of cultural and educational district*

The completion of the Beijing Exhibition Hall directly affected the site selection of the Beijing Planetarium, which further strengthened the development of the cultural and educational film functions in the western suburbs of Beijing. Since then, excellent buildings such as the Capital Gymnasium and the National Library have been built in this area, connecting the leisure and cultural life of the people in the capital horizontally in space, and greatly promoting the development of the “cultural and educational area” in the western suburbs.

At the same time, after the completion of the Beijing Exhibition Hall, it has organized many international and domestic large-scale exhibitions, and organized young people in the capital and farmers in the suburbs to visit and study. In the early stage of the exhibition, the achievements of the developed countries in the world at that time were highlighted, the future picture of China's development was depicted, and the enthusiasm of the people was aroused. In the later exhibitions, there are many achievements in the construction of socialist countries, which record the glorious course of national development and enhance the confidence of the people. Today, the Western Suburb Cultural and Educational Area with the Beijing Exhibition Hall as the core still hosts rich cultural and educational activities such as exhibitions and performances, and is an important area in the western area of Beijing's central city.

### *4.2. Formation of exhibition road living area*

The Xiwai Cultural Square on the south side of the Beijing Exhibition Hall and the Exhibition Hall Road extending southward are the main skeleton of the Exhibition Hall Street in Xicheng District, Beijing, vertically connecting the “Republic's No. 1 Residential Area” Banwanzhuang Community, Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture and other universities as well as various other administrative regions. Under the influence of Beijing Exhibition Hall, this area has created an urban style and pattern that represents Beijing's urban construction in the new era.

Exhibition Hall Road Living Area is a typical area where Beijing urban residents live after the founding of New China. On the basis of the western "neighborhood unit" model and the Soviet style, the Baiwanzhuang community integrates the "eight diagrams" of traditional Chinese culture. The buildings in the enclosed layout delineate the range of each district. The courtyard-shaped space formed between the buildings is introverted and quiet. This kind of space is a good communicative space [8]. As the tallest building on Exhibition Hall Road area, walking on the community road, the spire of the main building of the Beijing Exhibition Hall can be seen looking up. As the main image of the city, the strong architectural lines and high-rise main building of the Beijing Exhibition Hall give urban residents a strong sense of security and belonging in the motherland and the city. At the same time, the restaurants, theaters, squares and waterfront spaces attached to the Beijing Exhibition Hall are leisure places familiar to residents in this area. The community living space formed under the influence of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is a symbol of the harmonious and peaceful life of the residents of the capital in the new era, forming a special urban memory of a generation.

## **5. The shaping of the city spirit by the Beijing exhibition hall**

### *5.1. The urban spirit of unity and progress*

Inherited from Soviet architecture and developed in mainland China, the red star on the top of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is the cohesion and symbol of the city's spirit.

Different from the tenacious struggle and defense of the city symbolized by the red star of the Kremlin, the red star of the Beijing Exhibition Hall symbolizes the spirit of unity and improvement of the city, and it is also the backing and guarantee given to the people by the motherland and the city. Since its completion, the red star on the top of the Beijing Exhibition Hall has witnessed the development of New China, the construction of the western suburbs of Beijing, and the high-spirited spirit of struggle

of the builders. For urban residents, the red star on the top of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is also a symbol of the motherland and hometown, a symbol of development and hope.

### *5.2. An open and inclusive international spirit*

As a product under the influence of socialist urban planning and architectural styles, the Beijing Exhibition Hall is also a witness of international exchanges.

The construction of the Beijing Exhibition Hall has greatly promoted the dissemination and development of the Soviet architectural design principles of “socialist realism”, “national form” and “socialist content” in China, and promoted the exchange of architectural design ideas between China and the Soviet Union. The integration of practice became an important symbol of Sino-Soviet cultural, art and design exchanges in the 1950s [9]. After completion, the Beijing Exhibition Hall has hosted many international exhibitions, showing an open and inclusive attitude, expressing the desire of the country and the city to communicate with foreign countries, and promoting the development of Beijing as an international metropolis.

### *5.3. Civic spirit of loving life*

The Beijing Exhibition Hall shows its kindness in a unique way, providing citizens with a rich urban living space and cultivating the spirit of citizens who love life.

The Moscow restaurant has been the first choice for people in the capital to experience exotic customs for decades. The interior decoration of the restaurant is exquisite and elegant, the waiters in national costumes sing Russian songs, and the rich and varied Russian dishes are a deep memory in the hearts of a generation. The Beizhan Theater on the north side of the Beijing Exhibition Hall is composed of a circular arch with a span of 18 meters [10]. In the early stage of construction, it was used as a cinema to show various related films in conjunction with physical exhibitions, making the exhibition more vivid. Now the Beizhan Theater has staged a rich repertoire for a long time, ranging from dance dramas and musicals to cross talk and comedy, which has enriched the artistic and cultural life of the people in the capital. The Beizhan Houhu Recreation Area has beautiful scenery, a rich natural environment, and beautifies the urban space. At the same time, it is connected to the Nanchang River, an important river in the urban area of Beijing, and it is connected to the zoo, Zizhuyuan Park, etc., forming a systematic leisure and recreation area. space.

## **6. Conclusion**

As an important public building in the city, the Beijing Exhibition Hall has had a profound impact on the evolution and development of Beijing's urban space and the shaping of the city's spirit. In terms of space, the completion of the Beijing Exhibition Hall, horizontally connecting buildings such as the Beijing Planetarium, further strengthened the development of the “cultural and educational district” in the western suburbs of Beijing at that time, made up for the regret that the “Liang-Chen Plan” could not be realized, and inherited the planning architecture in the early days of the founding of the People's Republic of China. The vision of the experts for the planning of the capital. The vertical connection forms the Zhan Road street area, which has had a huge impact on the urban pattern of Beijing in the new era. In terms of humanities, it has shaped the urban spirit endowed with connotation. The united and upward urban spirit created under the guidance of the Red Stars in the Beijing Exhibition Hall gives people motivation and a sense of belonging. As a product of Sino-Soviet friendship, it inherits the profound friendship between the two peoples. At the same time, the Beijing Exhibition Hall accompanies the leisure life of the citizens with a friendly attitude.

This paper has certain limitations in the research on the influence of Soviet urban planning thought on the development of the urban spatial pattern of Soviet exhibition halls and related areas. In the future, the development of Sino-Soviet planning thought in modern China should be deeply studied, and the role of modern public buildings in the course of urban development should be further studied from the perspective of overall urban planning.

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